

Bering Sea–Western Interior RMP Scoping Meeting

Unalakleet Issue Summary

Unalakleet, Alaska November 22, 2013

These Issue summaries are created by the BLM after each community meeting. These documents summarize what was shared and are provided to each community for verification or revisions before being considered final.

Attendance:

19 people attended the Unalakleet community scoping meeting. 5 BLM representatives provided a presentation, discussion time around maps, and a sharing session.

Issues and concerns raised:

General

- What is the status of Ryan cabin?
- Can we apply to construct a shelter cabin up the headwaters of the North River (tributary of Unalakleet) where we go caribou hunting?
- Concerns expressed on behalf of Stebbins and St. Michaels residents who have even less economic opportunity than is available in Unalakleet, there are no jobs there and they really rely on BLM lands.
- What are the reasons behind the State of Alaska-selected land that runs north-south in a corridor as far north as Shaktoolik to the Anvik River south?
- What are the reasons behind the State of Alaska-selected land that runs east-west north of the Unalakleet River and an area of medium mineral potential?
- There is a lack of easements across Corporation-owned land to BLM land.
- The 17b easements need to be signed on the ground.
- What is the status/priority of the state-selected land conveyances along the Chirosky River watershed?
- We need clean water and clean air to support subsistence resources.
- About 99 allotments exist along the Unalakleet River. Concern was expressed for potential management agreement between the State of Alaska and the BLM over river/water management. The BLM and state should manage the river in partnership. The Native Village of Unalakleet indicated they would be willing to be part of any future management agreement.

Iditarod Trail

- Iditarod Trail use is occurring across native allotments and some allottees don't want the events that occur on the trail to cross their allotments.
- Requested that the BLM install BLM easement signs on the approved easements along the Iditarod Trail.
- The Iditarod Trail needs accurate trail marking to prevent trespass on Corporation-owned land, the current marking is inadequate.

BLM Land

- Need more law enforcement on the trail during the sled dog race

Fish-related

- Can BLM do stream channel studies and research so we can learn where the upwelling and downwellings are located on the Unalakleet and tributaries that support the fish species that rely on each stream feature for spawning? (in context of similar project occurring on South River tributary of Unalakleet River) Interested in potential chinook spawning habitat enhancement sites.
- Subsistence residents are penalized by ocean-based commercial fish harvesting, especially by-catch.

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- Q: What is the status of the water rights on the Unalakleet? A: The BLM installed stream gauges on the Main Unalakleet River in the past to document stream flow and apply for the minimum flow water right for maintaining spawning fish habitat and the values for which the river was designated as “wild.” Permit status with the SoA currently unknown.

Wildlife-related

- The moose hunt starts August 15 and it’s too warm, it should start later.
- Many depend upon moose to get through the winter for family and extended family. Sport and guided hunters fly-over and take moose and leave less for locals.
- We had a past, voluntary, 5-year moratorium on moose hunting.
- Concerns expressed on behalf of Stebbins and St. Michaels residents who have even less than is available in Unalakleet, there are no jobs there and they really rely on BLM lands. Someone from outside had taken 5 moose in this area.
- Concerns expressed over Office of Subsistence Management / State decisions on subsistence harvests (moose).
- Increased climate/weather pressures impacting subsistence species and prices are always increasing for fuel, etc. – makes subsistence difficult
- Caribou were historically in the Unalakleet-area and well to the south of town.
- Kingmetolik River is current southern boundary of Western Arctic Caribou Herd migration.
- Western Arctic Caribou Herd does not travel as far south as it used to, now we must travel to Granite Mountain and use snowmachines. We have to travel a greater distance and it is more expensive to hunt.
- Reindeer grazing opportunities are desired, very supportive of reindeer grazing. “Bring it on”
“Reindeer are delicious”
 - Historic herding occurred up Egavik Creek, North River (trib of Unk), South River (trib of Unk), Chirosky River (trib of Unk), and Klikatereq area.
 - Egavik Creek area used to have a reindeer processing plant circa 1930’s.

Cultural-related

- All Norton Sound villages have always cooperated and shared resources.
- There are numerous abandoned villages all along the coast.
- Many “hilltops” are culturally significant in the planning area.

Mineral Potential

- Concern expressed over who benefits from development of natural resources when developed (mining), the companies benefit from the development, not the locals. Even our scenic resources are hurt.
- Concern expressed about the sale of native allotments/fee-simple lands for development to private interests or development and what BLM could do about it?

ACECs

- There are no sheefish, except for at the mouth of the Unalakleet River, up the North River ACEC or far up the Unalakleet River ACEC.
- Both the North River ACEC and the Unalakleet River ACEC are very important for salmon and chinook salmon
- The most important resource in the Unalakleet River and all its tributaries/watershed is the fresh clean water because it supports all life forms. “It provides clean water and clean land” that support fish, berry, bear, and firewood resources.
- Unalakleet River ACEC is critical for chinook salmon spawning.

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- North River ACEC is valuable for caribou hunting that is reliable every year
- North River ACEC headwaters is very important for chinook salmon spawning
- Desire to protect Kingmetolik River area (due east of Shaktoolik) and the North River ACEC for future caribou herd migration

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